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Author of "Catechism on Field Training."

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AMMUNITION SUPPLY

By

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West Yorkshire Regt.

Author of "Catechism on Field Training"

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Ammunition Supply

CARE OF AMMUNITION.

You have had constantly drummed into your ears the need for taking care of your ammunition, and you know that a soldier without ammunition has lost a great deal of his fighting value.

NUMBER OF ROUNDS CARRIED.

I want you particularly to ponder over what I am going to explain to you:—

- (1) Each soldier on active service is supposed to carry on his person some 120 rounds of ammunition.
- (2) The total number of rounds carried with field units for each man amounts to 350 rounds, while the whole amount in the field, including the Lines of Communication, is normally only 550 rounds per rifle.

- (3) A battle, as you know, may last not for a few hours only, as it did in days gone by, but for days and weeks. A small and insignificant action may last for hours.

Have you got those three facts into your heads?

Well, supposing you are engaged in a small action where fighting lasts for just a few hours, you might easily expend two rounds a minute. That is not a very excessive amount, is it?

Under such conditions the ammunition you carry would enable you to fight for exactly *one hour*, no more. At the same rate of expenditure, the whole of the store of ammunition carried in the field for you would be used up in $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours.

Now do you begin to see the need for economy?

But I daresay many of you will say, "If that is so, why then don't they carry more stuff for us? Make it 1,000 rounds per man."

Wait a minute and let us make a calculation or two. Instead of 350 rounds, we require 1,000 rounds for a battalion 1,000 strong. A million rounds for a battalion. A box contains some 800 rounds. We require 1,250 boxes. It would take 80 carts to do it for 1 battalion, and over 300 for a Brigade, and then more would be wanted for the machine guns. Just think what it would mean for several Divisions or Army Corps or Armies.

Then you must remember you cannot take carts always across country, the heavier wagons and

lorries require good roads, and the bringing up of the heavy ammunition for the guns as well is a truly colossal task.

Do you begin to realize what supply entails, and why we must be so careful not to waste what we have?

I next want you to have an idea as to where the extra 350 rounds are to be found, and how you get them.

REGIMENTAL AMMUNITION RESERVE.

With the battalion, beyond the 120 rounds you have, there are 100 rounds per rifle carried partly on the pack animals and the rest in the S.A.A. carts. The pack animals carry 2 boxes only, and the carts 16.

For the machine gun, there are 3,500 on the limber and 8,000 in its own S.A.A. cart.

The 8 pack animals and the 6 S.A.A. carts form the Regimental Ammunition Reserve.

THE BRIGADE AMMUNITION RESERVE.

But all of this is not always available with the battalion. For even on the line of march, and certainly before we get into action, the Brigadier has collected part of it (usually 2 carts per battalion) to form his Brigade Ammunition Reserve.

This Brigade Reserve no longer is the sole property of the various battalions, it is under the Bri-

gadier, and may be used to supply any troops who may at the moment be in need of it.

If, however, the battalion is detached, the Brigadier usually returns the 2 carts, and it takes all its ammunition with it.

ARTILLERY BRIGADE AMMUNITION RESERVE.

Behind the Brigade Reserve there is a second source of supply. This is the Artillery Brigade Ammunition Column. Each Artillery Brigade has an Ammunition Column with it, and part of the ammunition it carries is for infantry. The amount comes to 80 rounds per rifle, and is carried in 7 S.A.A. carts and 6 G.S. wagons.

DIVISIONAL AMMUNITION COLUMN.

Further back still, a whole day's march, there are the various sections of the Divisional Ammunition Column, in convenient places, to supply the infantry and artillery brigades. These sections (the three of them) carry 50 rounds per rifle in G.S. wagons.

THE AMMUNITION PARK.

Further back still there is more ammunition in case of accidents in an Ammunition Park (100 rounds), and on the Lines of Communications at the least 100 rounds, but in reality as much as can be collected at the base, and some days' supply at railhead.

(Here it is as well to show on the blackboard the various echelons: (1) Regimental; (2) Brigade;

(3) *Artillery Brigade*; (4) *Div. A.C.*; (5) *A. Park*; (6) *L. of C.*).

METHOD OF SUPPLY AND REPLENISHMENT IN BATTLE.

Before going into action, the rounds each man has on him should be made up to 200. This will empty three or four of the battalion carts, and as there are only six to begin with, and two are probably with the Brigade Reserve, the whole of the battalion carts are emptied at the very beginning of the action.

The Sergeant-Major is under the direction of the Officer Commanding the battalion in charge of the battalion S.A.A. carts, and has with him orderlies and signallers to keep touch with companies and with the Brigade Reserve.

He immediately sends back the empty carts to the Brigade Reserve, and they should be at once replaced by full ones.

The Brigade Reserve is therefore almost immediately deprived of all its ammunition, and must get more.

METHOD OF OBTAINING AMMUNITION FROM ARTILLERY BRIGADE A.C.

As soon as there are three or four empty carts with him, the Officer Commanding the Brigade Ammunition Reserve, who is usually one of the

Adjutants, sends a requisition in writing to the Officer Commanding Artillery Brigade A.C. for more ammunition. This Artillery Brigade A.C. is usually about a mile in rear of the guns, and an orderly is sent from it as conductor to each Infantry Brigade it supplies.

The orderly takes the note, which asks for carts, or if carts are not available, for a certain number of boxes. The orderly returns with the full carts. The contents are transferred to the empty battalion carts (or the teams may be changed), and the empty carts return to the Artillery Brigade, leaving the Infantry Brigade Reserve full.

A similar procedure is adopted between the Artillery Brigade A.C. and the Divisional Ammunition Column.

BATTALION SUPPLY.

The duty of the Sergeant-Major is to get his battalion reserves as far forward as he can, and to keep them filled up from the Brigade Reserve.

COMPANY SUPPLY.

The pack animals go with their respective companies (two to each), each animal carrying two boxes. They are under the Company Quartermaster-Sergeant. His duty is to get the ammunition as close to his company as he can, and when his supply is exhausted, to return to the Battalion Reserve for more.

SUPPLYING THE FIRING LINE.

When closely engaged with an enemy it is hardly possible for a firing line to send back men for more ammunition, and it is most difficult to ensure a fresh supply. Carriers bringing up ammunition must remain in the firing line.

Under such circumstances it is usually only reinforcing troops which can bring up more ammunition for the firing line.

This is one of the principal duties of the Officer Commanding reinforcing troops, viz., to draw extra ammunition for his own men and for the firing lines in front.

He may get it either from the battalion carts, or the pack animals of the company.

You must carefully note this, that reinforcements should always bring in more ammunition for the firing lines. But it is also well to remember that reinforcements have to move quickly, and rush over open ground, and that 300 rounds in all is as much as they can conveniently carry.

(An anecdote may conveniently be inserted here, and further references made to the blackboard.)

Fire Direction and Control

Fire Direction and Control

POWER OF THE RIFLE.

You all know by this time how to make use of your rifle. You can tell me up to what distance it is sighted; you can explain to me the use of the dial sight, and perhaps you can tell me a whole heap of things about the construction of the rifle or the flight and penetration of the bullet, and so on.

But there are many more things I want you to think of than that. I want you to understand the power and also the limitations of the rifle when used in masses; just how much or how little it may do.

A man may be a splendid shot, and be able to hit almost anything standing or moving up to quite long ranges, but unless the object he is firing at is one that matters in the fight, the effect of his fire may be useless to his side.

The fire of a mass of rifles may be compared to the water jet from a hose or watering can. When the gardener uses it and directs the water where it is really required, and uses the right quantity, it is of great value to the growing things. But if the baby gets hold of it and waters the front door-

step, or fills the perambulator, the water is not used for what it was intended, and the value, so far as regards the growing things in the garden, is gone.

DIRECTING FIRE.

The commander who points out the object at which fire is to be used, is said to direct the fire. He corresponds with the gardener who knows what flowers require water.

FIRE CONTROL.

The man who gives the actual words of command to the men firing, is the fire-unit commander, and he controls the fire by the commands he gives. He corresponds to the person who may be holding the hose—not always the gardener—and under his direction is playing the jet of water first on one flower bed and then on another.

There are times, however, when the man who gives the actual executive commands is also the director, and has both to direct and control the fire. It is just like the gardener himself using the hose.

There are also times when it is impossible for anyone to direct and control the fire, such as when the troops are closely engaged at short range, or when men are widely extended at long range. In such cases it rests with the individual to control his own fire.

THE FIRE UNIT.

The smallest collective body we use is, as a rule, the Section. This is the fire unit, and the fire-unit commander is, therefore, the section com-

mander. There are occasions, however, when platoons or even companies may be given executive fire commands by their commanders.

APPLICATION OF FIRE.

A fire-unit commander must be able to apply his fire *at the right time*, in the *right volume*, and to the *right target*.

If he can't do this, he won't be of very much use. In days gone by, when we used to fire volleys in action as a general rule, it was by no means uncommon to find a section commander, well covered from view and fire in rear of his section, who was keeping up a steady fire by mechanically repeating "Ready, Present, Fire!" He imagined that so long as he caused his men to fire bullets towards the enemy, he was doing all that was required of him.

Why, of course, that fire was absolutely useless. He was not watching the enemy and looking for the effect. He was neither directing nor controlling the fire of his section, and it was sheer waste of ammunition.

DUTIES OF THE FIRE-UNIT COMMANDER.

We must then have as our fire-unit commanders men who are blessed with a certain amount of intelligence. They must be able to quickly understand the fire orders they get, and must be able to apply those orders to the situation in which they are placed, and use the fire of their units at the right time and at the right place. They must, therefore, be constantly observing the course of the fight.

The company commander, as a rule, gives only general instructions, he cannot give details constantly to each section, or even to each platoon.

He decides when it is time to open fire, and whether to use distributed or concentrated fire, and he usually roughly indicates the targets, and regulates the supply of ammunition.

But the fire-unit commander who gives the actual executive order has a good deal of responsibility. These are his special duties:—

- (1) He points out the target. It is most necessary that he should constantly practise this, and that the results should be tested by observation and question. It is very easy to make mistakes, and often in one small section half the men will be aiming at a mark which is not the one intended to be fired at. It is only practice in giving these orders which will show what is required to make them readily understood.

(This practice may be made on the landscape targets by use of the thermometer measure and miniature ammunition. It is as well to explain this now.)

- (2) He gives the orders for the sighting, and, if possible, supervises the adjustment of the sights. This is not often possible in the heat of battle, but constant practice in peace time should make it a habit, and the men will mechanically adjust their sights in war.
- (3) He regulates the volume of fire, that is to say he decides on the number of rounds, whether rapid or deliberate, and in doing so he must carefully consider the situation of the moment, the target, and the effect he can produce on it, as well as his supply of ammunition.

- (4) He reports directly he finds that ammunition is running short.

All commanders must be most particular not to waste ammunition, and must collect what they can, and when they can, from dead and wounded men. It is very difficult to replace ammunition during a battle.

WHEN TO OPEN FIRE.

You must be very careful not to open fire too soon, either in attack or in defence. By doing so you prevent surprise, and you often give your own position away. In the attack you delay the advance, probably do little damage, and waste ammunition which you may find it difficult to replace.

So ponder well before you open fire at all. At distances over 1,400 yards, the effect of fire of even large units, well directed and controlled, is very small. It is only in very exceptional circumstances that it should be employed, such as in the case of a large body of the enemy in a very vulnerable formation.

WHAT SORT OF FIRE TO EMPLOY.

At distances between 1,400 yards and 600 yards, carefully controlled collective fire is the best to use. The enemy is still some distance off, and supervision and control is comparatively easy, moreover, ammunition must not be wasted. We shall want all we can get for the closer ranges, when the supply will be still more difficult.

On the defence, however, the ammunition question is not so difficult; it has probably been all

arranged, and there is plenty of spare ammunition beside each section. In such circumstances, fire may be opened at longer ranges, but in the attack at the longer ranges fire should only be opened by those unable to advance without it, or by those units specially told off to give covering fire.

CONCENTRATED AND DISTRIBUTED FIRE.

Collective fire must necessarily be one of two things, either distributed or concentrated.

Distributed fire also may be distributed in one of two ways, laterally or in depth.

The effect of fire distributed laterally is to neutralize the enemy's fire along that front, while the effect of fire distributed in depth assures that part of the fire will be effective, especially when the enemy's position has not been definitely located.

Concentrated fire is more favourable for observation, and has greater effect, but at the spot to which it is applied only.

We come back to the hose pipe again.

Distributed fire is like the sprinkling of the water along a border or over a lawn. It disturbs the enemy's aim and prevents his moving, but it has not a decisive effect.

If we want to water a shrub or flower well we keep the hose pipe directed at it, and give the ground a thorough wetting. So if we want a decisive effect we concentrate the fire on a particular spot.

But it is not always easy to do so, for you cannot always see where your enemy is, and you can-

not pick out any particular mark to aim at. Here again constant practice is necessary in indicating targets.

(Here it may be convenient to show how targets may be indicated on a landscape target, and to illustrate the difficulty there may be if a firing line is lying in the middle of a big field, etc.)

ENFILADE FIRE.

Oblique and enfilade fire* is far more effective than frontal, and opportunities for its use constantly occur in battle, especially on the defensive. Fire-unit commanders and even individuals must always be on the look-out for using it.

RAPID FIRE.

Rapid fire is not the ordinary fire to use. It is used only occasionally, and when used it must never be allowed to become a wild expenditure of ammunition. It must always be accurate as well as rapid, mere rapidity without aim is worse than useless.

There are several occasions when this rapid fire is necessary.

- (1) If it is urgently required to keep down the enemy's fire quickly.
- (2) To cover the withdrawal of other troops, as in (1).
- (3) To pursue an enemy with fire.

* Explain on Blackboard.

- (4) Against a cavalry attack.
- (5) Against a specially good target exposed for a short time only.
- (6) As the final preparation for the assault, or to beat off the enemy's assault.
- (7) To surprise an enemy.

Now do you quite understand all these points?

You must get it into your heads that on the field of battle ammunition is your very life blood, and you must take care of it, and get more whenever you can, but there are times when it *is necessary to put in a very heavy fire, and this rapid fire—if accurate—enables you to do it.*

Wild and unsteady fire is absolutely useless. You know how our men despise the ordinary German infantry because they fire without aiming.

RANGE FINDING.

You may say "but how are we going to aim correctly if we don't know the ranges?"

There are special observers detailed to take ranges and to pass on the information. But every fire-unit commander should observe for himself the effect of his fire, which will frequently enable him to correct ranges.

At any rate, don't over-estimate the range. At long ranges, if doubt exists as to distance, and if effect is required quickly, combined sights may be used, but no good results will be obtained by bodies of much less than 100 men.

FIRE DISCIPLINE.

What we have spoken about before refers chiefly to the non-commissioned officers, but what I'm now going to say refers entirely to the private soldiers.

Fire discipline is obeying the signals and orders of the commander, and watching the enemy. It means that you must adjust your sights, take deliberate aim, see that you do not waste your ammunition, and cease fire when ordered or when the target has disappeared. It means that you must endure the enemy's fire when you can't reply to it, and use your rifle coolly and intelligently if acting on your own.

This fire discipline is just as important as the direction and control of the commanders, for without it the effects would be "nil."

INDIVIDUAL FIRE.

This is the fire which is opened without orders from a fire-unit commander.

It is naturally the exception, for collective fire properly controlled and divided has greater effect, but it is justified on occasions, and may be very effective.

At distances over 600 yards individual fire will very seldom be justified, and the target must be a very favourable one.

But at the shorter ranges, or when fire control is very difficult or impossible, individual fire is frequently necessary.

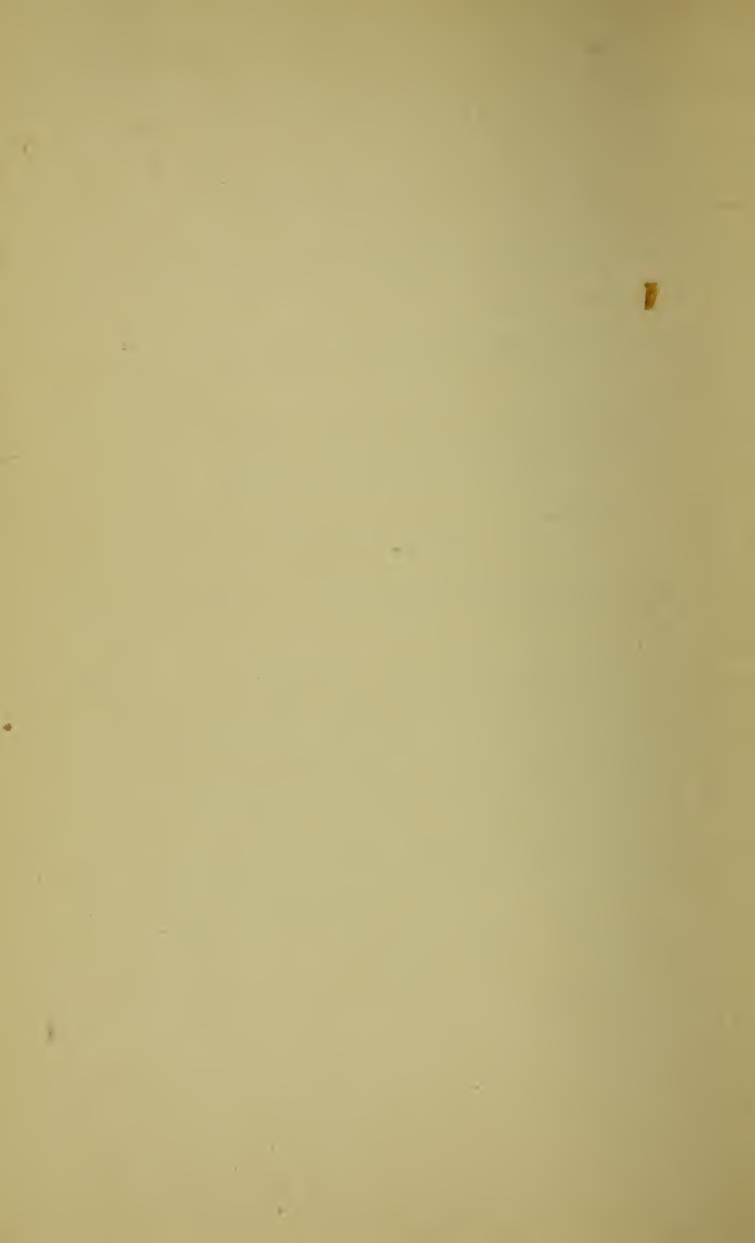
The individual soldier will then have to select his own target and control his own expenditure of

ammunition. He must then think and act for himself, and do what he considers best to assist his own side.

GOLDEN RULES.

These principles should be borne in mind by all soldiers when engaged in action:—

- (1) Not to fire at all unless the commander has given the order to commence.
- (2) But, in situations when he is without a commander and cannot get orders, to act for himself, and open fire if he considers the effect will justify it.
- (3) Never to fire when in motion.
- (4) To cease firing directly he receives the order to do so.
- (5) To aim low and fire slow. The most common error is to fire high. Hurry almost invariably results in this. If rapid fire be opened it does not mean that no aim is taken; on the contrary, rapid fire to be effective must be combined with moderate accuracy.
- (6) Remember, rapid fire is the exception, and is only to be adopted when the need or opportunity is great.



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